MKG COLLECTION ONLINE: THE POTENTIAL OF OPEN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Antje Schmidt

> »We can't know what uses will be made of our collections once we put them in the world's hands, and indeed that is the brightest promise of the digital future.«[1]

It has always been the core mission of public museums to make their collections accessible and known to the public. Nowadays this means not only creating analogue exhibitions or to print exhibition catalogues, but publishing information about collections and digital images of objects in an online collection. Users of online collections expect accurate information that is easily accessible and includes relevant texts, images and audio-visual material in high quality. Many museums are currently providing online access to their collections. But while open access to these resources is already identified as an inevitable trend,[2] and the number of cultural institutions that allow unrestricted use of their digitized collections (in case the objects are in the public domain) is increasing, as shown by the most recent example of the *Metropolitan Art Museum* in New York in February 2017, many museums are, nevertheless, struggling with this concept.

The reasons why not more museums have opened their collection for reuse yet and are still restricting access are, according to Merete Sanderhoff, mostly based on assumptions that can be identified as myths: The fear of losing money from potential image sales and the idea of having control over the reuse of the digital images in order to protect the original work.[3]

In October 2015 the *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg* (MKG) launched the *MKG Collection Online*. The MKG is the first art museum in Germany to open up its digitized collections for unrestricted reuse. This means that images of the artworks and artefacts that are already in the public domain will not be licensed restrictively by the museum. They are not only accessible but free for downloading and can be used for private and sci-

---

1   *John Overholt:* Five Theses on the Future of Special Collections. In: RBM: A Journal of Rare Books. Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage 14 (2013/1), p. 15–20, here p. 18. URL: http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:10601790 (all websites have been accessed on November 14th 2017).

2   See *Liz Neely:* Creating Culture by, with and for the Public. In: Andrea Wallace, Ronan Deazley (eds.): Display at Your Own Risk: An Experimental Exhibition of Digital Cultural Heritage. 2016, p. 261–271, here, p. 262. URL: http://displayatyourownrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Display-At-Your-Own-Risk-Publication.pdf.

3   See *Merete Sanderhoff:* Open Images. Risk or Opportunity for Art Collections in the Digital Age? In: Britta Tøndborg (ed.): Nordic Museology 2013/2, p. 131–146. URL: http://www.nordiskmuseologi.org/Gamle%20numre/NM%202013-2.pdf.

entific as well as for creative and even commercial purposes without asking for permission.

What were the preconditions and considerations that led to this decision? What have been the expected benefits, what are the experiences and what has to be taken into account for the development of an open access policy in the future?

MKG's Digitization project and the MKG Collection Online[4]

The idea of a *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg* was born in 1866 when the *Museum for Art and Industry* was initiated by a civic society called *Patriotische Gesellschaft* in Hamburg.[5] Eleven years later, in 1877, the founding Director, Justus Brinckmann put these plans into practice and opened the museum as the *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe*. It is one of the earliest examples of this new type of museums of applied art. The plan was to gather and exhibit historical and current examples of good design as models for contemporary producers of arts and crafts as well as for industrial designers. Historical cultural achievements were presented in such a way that ordinary citizens could explore them and, through refining their taste, improve the quality of the work produced in the region, so as to maintain its market competitiveness.[6]

Nowadays the collection of the MKG comprises approximately 500,000 objects that range from ancient art to contemporary design, spanning diverse collections from a Chinese tea set to a contemporary advertising poster. Only a small percentage of them are on display. The majority is in storage most of the time due to conservatory concerns and also because of the lack of space to present them. When visiting the museum's main website one can find the highlights of all the different areas of the collection. But these are only a few examples and meant as placeholder and pars-pro-toto for the vast amount of half a million objects.

In November 2012 a long-term digitization project was started at MKG in order to digitize and catalogue the museum's entire holdings of approximately

....

4 See also *Antje Schmidt:* Warum »Access« nicht genug ist. Die MKG Sammlung Online und das Potenzial von offenen und nachnutzbaren Sammlungen. In: Konferenzband EVA Berlin 2016. Elektronische Medien und Kunst, Kultur und Historie. 23. Berliner Veranstaltung der internationalen EVA-Serie Electronic Media and Visual Arts, Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2017 (2016) (EVA Berlin, Band 23), S. 169–174. URL: https://books. ub.uni-heidelberg.de/arthistoricum/reader/download/256/256-17-78031-1-10-20170612. pdf.

5 The Patriotische Gemeinschaft was founded in 1765 as *Hamburgische Gesellschaft zur Beförderung der Künste und nützlichen Gewerbe*. This society was established by Hamburg citizens to support common public goals in the spirit of enlightenment.

6 *David Klemm:* Das Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in Hamburg. Von den Anfängen bis 1945. Hamburg 2004.

half a million objects.[7] The current focus lies on the photography department with more than 75,000 works. Right at the beginning of the project it became clear that publishing the cataloguing data and the corresponding images in an online collection was the main future goal and in 2013 this vision became the core part of a five year digital strategy plan.[8] The objective was not only to make the data and images accessible but also make them reusable for educational and creative purposes as well as for research and commercial reuses to share them with as many people as possible. Therefore the first step was to enable semantic interoperability using data standards and mapping to international vocabularies.[9]

If the collection catalogue is maintained digitally, an online collection of a museum contains data from this collection database. The collection catalogue ideally holds information for all the museum's objects, not only the highlights, and is a collaborative effort between many experts within one museum. For the publication at *MKG Collection Online*, the data is taken directly from the internal database and since this was created for internal use it is academic in nature.[10] This is reflected in the structure of the online collection as well as in its object information that uses terminologies made for experts.

Because this documentation data was originally created by experts for other experts rather than for the general public, it was important to make at least the structure very easily accessible for the general user. The result was an interface based on a faceted search like it is used in many online shops. With this feature the users do not necessarily need to know what they are looking for or how it should be described. They are able to browse the collections without entering a search term, can sort chronologically and are able to narrow their search by simple filters. If the visitor has accessed the online presentation the intention is to lead him to new discoveries and prevent »dead-

---

7   It is funded by the Ministry of Finance in Hamburg in order to evaluate market prices of the collection items owned by the City State of Hamburg.

8   Antrag Strategie digitale Bildung und Vermittlung am MKG, Nov. 2013. (unpublished, in German only).

9   To fulfill the current standards of documentation for the use and reuse of cataloguing data, a change of database including the migration of approximately 100,000 object datasets was inevitable.

10 The information provided online does not include every field of the collection database as some of them are only for internal purposes or some can contain sensitive information, e.g. market value. The documentation data that is published (if known and applicable) is the inventory number, artist or maker, actor role, object type, title, material and technique, date and place of production/modification, marks and inscriptions, dimensions, classifications, iconography and depicted person and place, period and style and description. The vocabulary used for cataloguing is in large parts linked to the Integrated Authority File of the German National Library (GND), to Wikipedia and Geonames, as well as to thesauri like Iconclass and the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT). All persons and corporate bodies are linked to their respective GND record, if available.

ends«. A Wikipedia-like use through hyperlink-hopping was established and even links to external resources like authority files have been included.

Alongside features like setting up a user collection and social sharing, the emphasis was placed on an aesthetic and responsive design. However, the most important point was to implement an open access policy with the possibility to easily download high quality images without registration and to make explicit rights statements about what the users are allowed to do.[11] This is put into practice by using the CC0 1.0 Universal Creative Commons Public Domain Dedication (CC0) for the images of the public domain objects and linking to the human-readable short version of the legal code.[12] The text describes that the images can be used for any purpose. The users can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, all without asking for permission. The digital images can be shared in social networks, can be combined with other resources, used for scientific purposes or teaching, may be integrated in new digital applications or even printed on a shower curtain or a T-Shirt. Furthermore all the metadata, even the information related to the copyrighted material, has been released under the CC0 Public Domain Dedication in machine-readable format and can be used for new services or research.[13]

The great potential of the digital collections of the MKG is revealed in their ability to be connected with other collections and resources. On the one hand, they are made available through national or international portals (like *Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek [DDB]* or *Europeana*) or portals serving a special interest (like e.g. *Daguerreobase*, where daguerreotypes from different European collections are displayed together). The collections can be presented and researched in an interdisciplinary manner. The single object can attract more attention and new connections can be made visible. On the other hand they can be integrated in virtual exhibitions, e.g *Europeana Art Collections* with thematic and narrative approaches, deliver new insights and foster new research. An additional advantage are the APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) provided by *DDB* and *Europeana* allowing developers to integrate the data in new tools.

---

11 The images are provided as high quality JPEGs and are available on request in the best available version (TIFF). See URL: http://sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/en/termsandconditions.

12 See URL: https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0.

13 The metadata is made available as LIDO-XML on GitHub. URL: https://github.com/MKG Hamburg. For the LIDO format see URL: http://network.icom.museum/cidoc/working-groups/lido/what-is-lido/.

The concept of OpenGLAM

With the decision to implement an open access policy the MKG followed the example of a growing number of art museums worldwide[14] that allow downloading, often in the highest possible resolution, sharing, modifying and remixing their digitized artworks if they are out of copyright.

> »We hope people will use our images to enrich their lives. But they're free to make shower curtains or stationary. We don't care.«[15]

With this statement James Cuno, President and Chief Executive of the *J. Paul Getty Trust*, exemplifies what can be seen as the most important benefit from opening up the museum collections: That the artworks or objects can be put in public hands and can be reused and processed in entirely unexpected ways, without any restrictions. And Berndt Arell, General Director of the *Swedish Nationalmuseum* in Stockholm, acknowledges that artworks that are already out of copyright belong to everyone:

> »We are committed to fulfilling our mission to promote art, interest in art, and art history by making images from our collections an integral part of today's digital environment. We also want to make the point that these artworks belong to and are there for all of us, regardless of how the images are used. We hope our open collection will inspire creative new uses and interpretations of the artworks.«[16]

This means the online visitor or user is free to do whatever he wants without regulations. It does not just mean putting data and content online. It is about making these resources openly available and reusable and it describes a change of mindset.[17] The images may also be altered and combined with other content for the creation of completely new works. In this way it is pos-

---

14 Since 2010 institutions in Europe and the United States have launched image releases of substantial parts of their collections, e.g. the *Rijksmuseum* in Amsterdam, the *National Gallery of Denmark*, the *National Gallery of Art*, USA, the *Los Angeles County Museum of Art*, *Yale University Collections* and the *J. Paul Getty Museum*. Institutions that followed after the launch of MKG Collection Online were the *Nationalmuseum Sweden* in Stockholm and the *Metropolitan Museum* in New York.

15 *Michael Cannell:* New Online Openness Lets Museums Share Works with the World. New York Times 27.10.2015. URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/arts/design/new-online-openness-lets-museums-share-works-with-the-world.html?_r=1.

16 Press release of the *Nationalmuseum Stockholm* on the occasion of the launch of its Public Domain Policy on 11.10.2016. URL: http://www.nationalmuseum.se/English-startpage/Collections/Nationalmuseum-releases-3000-images-on-Wikimedia-Commons/.

17 Open data and open content are important for establishing the concept of the Cultural Commons. The commons are a set of resources maintained in the public sphere for the use and benefit of everyone. *Michael Edson:* Museums and the Commons: Helping Makers Get Stuff Done. URL: http://www.slideshare.net/edsonm/museums-and-the-commons-helping-makers-get-stuff-done-6779050. For further reading on aspects of openness in museums *Merete Sanderhoff* (ed.): Sharing is Caring. Openness and Sharing in the Cultural Heritage Sector. Copenhagen 2014. URL: http://www.smk.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Billeder/forsiden/94124_sharing_is_Caring_UK.pdf.

sible for the online visitor to participate actively in the production and distribution of knowledge or creative inventions, and to become a co-creator instead of only being a consumer. This perception is at the core of the so-called OpenGLAM network that shares principles on access and reuse of digitized cultural heritage:[18]

> »Galleries, libraries, archives and museums have a fundamental role in supporting the advance of humanity's knowledge. They are the custodians of our cultural heritage and in their collections they hold the record of humankind. The internet presents cultural heritage institutions with an unprecedented opportunity to engage global audiences and make their collections more discoverable and connected than ever, allowing users not only to enjoy the riches of the world's memory institutions, but also to contribute, participate and share.«[19]

The most important point behind the idea of OpenGLAM is that no new rights should be put on public domain material when it is digitized and that metadata about the artefacts should be released in the public domain.[20] Therefore an appropriate legal tool like CC0 or the Public Domain Mark 1.0 (PDM) should be used and the institution should make clear and explicit rights statements.[21] Furthermore the data should be available also as machine-readable (as linked) data and it should be made as easy as possible for others to use the content.

But even if the European Commission [EC] recommends giving widest possible access to digitized cultural material in the public domain and to ensure its widest possible reuse, this remains an area of concern. Cultural heritage institutions restrict access even to digital reproductions of those artworks and objects for which copyright has already expired or do not give sufficient information about the copyright of the data and the images they publish online. In Germany, according to the latest EC-report, »especially museums […] are still hesitant to label content which is clearly in the public domain (PD) in physical form as PD after digitization«.[22] Why did the MKG opt for an open access policy instead?

....

18 The acronym GLAM stands for Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums.

19 URL: http://openglam.org/principles/.

20 According to the *Europeana Public Domain Charter* the »Public Domain is the material from which society derives knowledge and fashions new cultural works. Having a healthy and thriving Public Domain is essential to the social and economic well-being of society.« URL: http://pro.europeana.eu/files/Europeana_Professional/Publications/Public%20Domain%20Charter%20-%20EN.pdf.

21 URL: https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/. For the distinction between CC0 and PDM see URL: https://creativecommons.org/choose/mark/?lang=en.

22 European Commission, Cultural heritage. Digitisation, online accessibility and digital preservation. Report on the Implementation of Commission Recommendation 2011/711/EU, Progress report 2013–2015, June 2016, p. 1–74, here: p. 23. URL: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2016-43/2013-2015_progress_report_18528.pdf.

Open access policy as support for the institutional mission and as a pragmatic approach

The decision to make the collection as open as possible and available for reuse was mainly influenced by the example of the *Rijksmuseum* in Amsterdam and its approach to the creative reuse of the collections as well as by the experiences of other museums that opened up their collections.[23] The *Rijksmuseum* is one of the best known examples when it comes to open collections because of the great attention it gained for a web platform called *Rijksstudio* launched in 2012. In *Rijksstudio* users get access to high-quality images in high resolution, can create their own online exhibition, are encouraged to reuse and download it and then share their creation with the museum and the broader public.[24] With the *Rijksstudio Award* the *Rijksmuseum* promotes reuse of works of art in new designs such as, for example, a tapestry collection or fashion. This idea of reuse corresponds to the *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe*'s initial founding charter from 1877: to offer individuals working in the arts and crafts examples for study and imitation so as to improve the quality of the work of the local workshops. In the early years, the MKG even lent out many objects to the workshops as exemplary models intended to serve as a direct source of inspiration. In digital terms this means opening up the collection for reuse. MKG's mission has always been based on the assumption that every work of art or creative design is inspired by something in the past. The decision to make the digital images and information of the collections freely available is therefore understood as a logical update of the mission in the 21st century and the digital realm.

But there were also pragmatic considerations that led to an open access policy: When we at the MKG decided we wanted the collection to be reused the way the *Rijksmuseums* did, we started thinking about what license would offer the best fit for this goal. As we wanted the license to be easy to understand and interoperable with platforms like *Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek* and *Europeana*, we examined the Creative Commons licenses further.[25] After having analysed the current business model at the MKG it became obvious that a licensing model that would prohibit commercial reuse would not be

23 Analysing the approach of the *Statens Museum for Kunst* (SMK), Copenhagen and the *Livrustkammaren och Skoklosters slott med Stiftelsen Hallwylska museet* (LSH) in Sweden helped shaping the idea of open access at MKG. *Joris Pekel:* Making a Big Impact on a Small Budget. How the Livrustkammaren och Skoklosters slott med Stiftelsen Hallwylska museet (LSH) Shared Their Collection with the World. 1.4.2015. URL: http://pro.euro peana.eu/files/Europeana_Professional/Publications/Making%20Impact%20on%20a%20 Small%20Budget%20-%20LSH%20Case%20Study.pdf. For SMK see note 17.

24 *Joris Pekel:* Democratising the Rijksmuseum. 2014. p. 8–15, here p. 8. URL: http://pro.euro peana.eu/files/Europeana_Professional/Publications/Democratising%20the%20Rijksmu seum.pdf.

25 *John H. Weitzmann:* Creative Commons für Kulturinstitutionen. In: Ellen Euler, u.a. (eds.): Handbuch Kulturportale. Berlin/Boston 2015. Available at URL: https://irights.info/wp -content/uploads/2016/01/Weitzmann-2015-Creative-Commons-fuer-Kulturinstitutio nen.pdf.

sufficient to support this mission and would not even be feasible.[26] Several studies have shown that the cost of managing intellectual property almost always outweighs actual revenue. [27]

By using a license that allows commercial use there are more possibilities for distributing the digital representations of collection items via blogs, online articles, social media and of course Wikipedia that result in a higher visibility of the collection and the museum even if this is not directly measured in monetary terms, but in the increased and new forms of reuse.[28]

Furthermore the use of images for Wikipedia is only possible with an open license. Therefore a non-commercial restriction would only inhibit intended use, for example in blogs or for teaching purposes, instead of preventing non-intended use.[29] It became clear that only a license that allows commercial use and enables designers to develop their own new products using MKG's collection was suitable.

We then chose the CC0 Public Domain Dedication instead of other open Creative Commons licenses because we wanted to keep it as easy as possible for everybody to reuse our images. We did not want to complicate the process by the obligation to add an attribution and a license to a newly created work (like it is the case if you use a CC-CY-SA or a CC-BY license). We also have been very much aware of the fact that we do not have the resources to control the use of the images. It is impossible and not useful to actively check and control if the attribution was applied correctly or where images were used on the web – on the contrary, as the experience from the *Rijksmuseum* has shown. Giving away the best quality images allowed the *Rijksmuseum* to gain more control over the digital representations that had appeared online, replacing many inferior versions with its high-quality images.[30] And how can anyone prevent visitors from taking pictures inside the museum? Additionally, any restriction would lower the impact of our mission:

> »In the digital age, the restrictions museums lay on digital images of public domain artworks are standing in the way of education, research, and creative reuse on digital media terms. Effectively, the obligation many museums feel to protect and preserve their collections

26 For example not allowing commercial reuse without permission means that the external educators in the museum have to ask to use images of the artworks during their tours and programmes; it means that curators have to ask for permission to display an image in a presentation during a public talk if the visitors pay for attending.

27 Already in 2004, *Simon Tanner:* Reproduction Charging Models & Rights Policy for Digital Images in American Art Museums. A Mellon Foundation Study. London 2004. URL: https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/48081293/USMuseum_SimonTanner.pdf. Recently *Effie Kapsalis:* The Impact of Open Access on Galleries, Libraries, Museums, & Archives. 27.4.2016. URL: http://nck.pl/media/attachments/318056/2016_03_10_OpenCollections_Public.pdf.

28 *Sanderhoff,* Sharing, see note 17.

29 Open Creative Commons licenses are CC-BY (attribution) and CC-BY-SA (attribution-share alike) See *Weitzmann*, note 25.

30 See *Pekel*, note 24, p. 8.

against any misuse gets in the way of their obligation to educate the public about its collections.«[31]

But more importantly, the legal concept of the public domain is also violated by restricting access to digital reproductions of artworks and objects that are already in the public domain. We asked ourselves why museums that seem to be very concerned about the distribution of their digital images in terms of moral aspects often violate the concept of the public domain by claiming copyright over an automated scan of an out of copyright artwork.

Considering these factors we were convinced that instead of prohibiting certain uses of the content, a fair-use recommendation would be sufficient: We ask the users to give credit without violating the concept of the public domain while supporting the mission.[32]

Benefits of MKG's open access policy: Creating new connections

The experience after a year and a half of open access at the MKG has shown that the shift to an open policy is highly rewarding, the positive effects are widely visible and the benefits named in the study by Effie Kapsalis such as increased use and dissemination of collections, strengthened institutional brand and increased funding opportunities can be confirmed.[33]

A direct effect is the comparatively high number of downloads and use of the digital images because of the possibility to include them without restrictions. Even though there were only 3,000 objects with respective images online when the *MKG Online Collection* was launched and there are now (April 2017) more than 8,000 images free for reuse, the shift to the open policy has already led to more than 45,000 downloads.[34] Furthermore the new strategy opened up new possibilities for funding as the MKG is currently in high demand as a partner for research projects and grant applications as more

31 *Sanderhoff*, Open Images, see note 3, p. 136 f.

32 This is based on *Europeana*'s Public Domain Usage Guidelines: URL: https://www.euro peana.eu/portal/de/rights/public-domain.html. Terms and conditions of *MKG Collection Online:* URL: http://sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/en/termsandconditions.

33 *Kapsalis*, see note 27, p. 2.

34 This includes direct downloads from the website and downloads via the image links in the LIDO-XML metadata, while it has to be acknowledged that the real number of downloads must be even higher as the metrics were implemented only in December 2015. This assumption is based on a comparison to the numbers of downloads at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa that also operated without marketing the launch: In the 12 months following the launch in 2014, 17,405 images were downloaded, while just over 30,000 images were available at launch, and in the 12 months since then, another 20,000 have been made available. At MKG after one year with 7,000 images available for reuse, 25,000 have been downloaded. *Adrian Kingston, Philip Edgar:* A Review of a Year of Open Access Images at Te Papa. MWA2015: Museums and the Web Asia 2015. 15.8.2015. URL: http://mwa2015.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/a-review-of-a-year-of-open-access-im ages-at-te-papa/.

funding projects request a free reuse of the results or freely accessible data is the basis of the research.

The most important benefit is that the open access policy allows others to create something new that we would perhaps never have thought of. Participation in projects like *Coding da Vinci Nord*, a hackathon based on open cultural data, has shown that through open data new audiences can be reached because innovative access to the collection can be created by others. The machine-readable and therefore easy to reuse data has led to the creation of a game aimed at discovering the museum based on the information provided by *MKG Collection Online*. Another project, the mobile app *Zeitblick*, uses image recognition to connect a selfie of the user with a corresponding historical portrait photograph from the MKG collection and provides additional information about the portrayed person and a link back to the respective object website of *MKG Collection Online*.[35]

Based on positive feedback gained from the implementation of the open access strategy, there is also an impact on the museum in terms of developing the institutional mission. Colleagues feel more motivated to document the collection if they know their work is seen and useful for others. The collection catalogue and the online collection are not understood only as search tools but as a way to spread knowledge, enhance the visitor's experience and gain new audiences. By sharing content and data openly, people get the opportunity to participate. The (online) visitor is not regarded just as a consumer, but now understood as a co-creator and partner who spreads the knowledge about the collection, can add important new perspectives and can be inspired by the collection to create something new according to the founding mission of the MKG.

Open = Easily accessible for everyone?

In digitized form, objects and museum collections can become increasingly accessible. This presents a number of challenges: Users need to understand that these collections are explicitly open, and cultural institutions need to understand what users want and how they interact with digital resources and that they need to as well as be able to demonstrate value of the open resources.

One of the biggest challenges for all museums and cultural institutions, and also for the MKG, consists in clearing copyright and related rights. It has to be done whether the museum adopted an open access policy for their public domain material or not. This task is not only time consuming and expensive but often impossible if the rights holder cannot be identified. This means that not only can an object not be downloaded or reused, but that it is impos-

---

35 The application is available in the App Store and Play Store. It is openly licensed and can be used with other images of other collections or can be developed further. URL: https://hackdash.org/projects/57dd6cb2d9284f016c047471.

sible to make it visible online. This problem becomes evident when analysing data of large online collections, for example *Europeana*. Then the »black hole of the 20th century«[36] occurs. As clearing copyright is more complicated the amount of datasets decreases dramatically for material created in the second half of the 20th century. This means that the digital realm in itself is not equally open for research and reuse, it is dominated by public domain or out of copyright works. A factor that should be taken into account when research is based on digital resources and connections between artworks is that objects and collections cannot be displayed because of intellectual property rights issues.

After the rights have been cleared and a licensing or non-licensing policy has been chosen, another challenge is how to communicate this rights statement consistently. As Andrea Wallace has shown in detail, there are no established practices or guidelines how to communicate an open access policy effectively. On the contrary, even world-class and leading institutions in this field are struggling with this.[37] Regarding the open access policy at the MKG, there have also been obstacles to overcome. The explanation of the policy based on the *Europeana* fair-use recommendations, at the time of the launch, was too hidden to make it easily accessible and it was not clearly stated that these recommendations are not a binding legal contract, which could make it confusing for the user. [38] In addition, in order to facilitate reuse, a reuse-facet has been added to the interface of the *MKG Collection Online* and users are now able to filter directly for objects with unrestricted use.

After all, also the concept of the public domain itself can be confusing. When we compare the rights statements of the *Rijksmuseum*, the *Statens Museum for Kunst* (SMK) and the MKG used in *Europeana* this becomes obvious: The public domain material of SMK and MKG is labelled as CC0, which means the rights that might be produced during the digitization are waived and the digital image is dedicated to the public domain. The content of the *Rijksmuseum* in *Europeana* is labelled with the Public Domain Mark instead, while on the *Rijksmuseum* website it is stated that the CC0 Public Domain Dedication is used.[39] In effect it is the same, because you are free to use the content without any restrictions, but for the users this could be confusing.

....

36 *Pablo Uceda Gomez, Paul Keller:* The Missing Decades: The 20th Century Black Hole in Europeana. 13 November 2015. URL: http://pro.europeana.eu/blogpost/the-missing-dec ades-the-20th-century-black-hole-in-europeana.

37 *Andrea Wallace:* Exhibition Methodology. In: Wallace, Deazley, see note 2, p. 9–27, here p. 16.

38 *Wallace*, see note 37, p. 14. The fair-use recommendation can now be accessed directly from the main page of MKG Collection Online and the sentence has been included URL: http://sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/en/termsandconditions.

39 See for example the same object on the *Rijksmuseum* website, URL: https://www.rijksmu seum.nl/en/search/objects?p=1&ps=12&st=OBJECTS&ii=0#/AK-MAK-240,0 and in *Europeana,* URL: https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en/record/90402/AK_MAK_240.html ?q=The+bodhisattva+Manjushri. For the difference between CC0 and PDM see URL: https://creativecommons.org/choose/mark/?lang=en.

Until now we know very little about the different audiences who use digital museum collections and how the content is reused, even if we can measure how much our content is used. We assume that a researcher might need other information than young people, developers need the content in other formats than art educators. We need to investigate the user's needs to be able to decide where to invest time and money.[40] While applying an open access policy is still perceived as pioneering within the GLAM sector, it is argued by Simon Tanner that the average person hardly cares about this shift because they assume that digital cultural heritage should already be open.[41] He therefore recommends on the one hand that the modern memory institution has to make its content as freely available as possible to stay relevant. On the other hand he argues that qualified research is needed to provide evidence whether communities care about using open resources suggesting an approach called the Balanced Value Impact Model.[42] Apart from download numbers or hits on the website, focusing on value through impact assessment is perceived as a new suitable method to measure the success of openly available content because the direct link between the open resources and the effect on people's behaviour, knowledge, skills, status, wealth, well-being, or effectiveness can be demonstrated.[43]

The further development of openGLAM: Open for alternative narratives?

Relatively little attention in the discussion about open access to museums collections has been given to the fact that museums shape and control their information in the digital space through decisions like they do in the physical space:[44] decisions about what to digitize first, which terminologies or classifications to use for cataloguing the collection, which authority files to link to and also what kind of information to document and what to leave out in order to balance quality of the content and manage the quantity of a vast

---

40 *Maria Economou:* Evaluating Digital Ressources in Cultural Heritage. Lessons from the ScotDigiCHNetwork. 2017. URL: http://www.academia.edu/32428706/Evaluating_Digital _Resources_in_Cultural_Heritage_Lessons_from_the_ScotDigiCH_network.

41 See *Simon Tanner:* Open GLAM: The Rewards (and Some Risks) of Digital Sharing for the Public Good. In: Wallace/Deazley see note 2, p. 239–247, here p. 243 f.

42 *Simon Tanner:* Measuring the Impact of Digital Resources: The Balanced Value Impact Model. London 2012. URL: https://www.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/pubs/Balan cedValueImpactModel_SimonTanner_October2012.pdf.

43 *Harry Verwayen:* The Impact of Cultural Heritage. 14 March 2017. URL: https://medium. com/impkt/the-impact-of-cultural-heritage-creating-a-common-language-28cba0e1a f0b.

44 Aside from my own observation of processes in museums, this empirical study from the perspective of information studies also provides evidence for this point of view: *Isto Huvila:* How a Museum Knows? Structures, Work Roles, and Infrastructures of Information Work. In: Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology 64/7 (2013), p. 1375–1387. See also *Gertraud Koch:* Kultur digital. Tradieren und Produzieren unter neuen Vorzeichen. In: Eckhard Bolenz, Lina Franken, Dagmar Hänel (eds.): Wenn das Erbe in die Wolke kommt. Digitalisierung und kulturelles Erbe. Essen 2015, p. 15–28.

amount of objects that are not digitized yet.[45] So are they really open?[46] Online, alternative contexts are possible as multiple metadata can be displayed, but »by giving the object a specific« set of metadata, the information carrying potential of the object is restricted«.[47] At the same time the object's meaning is not singular but depends on various factors, like for example cultural, institutional or disciplinary factors. The openness is also restricted by the chosen language of the cataloguing and metadata information. This challenge becomes evident at the MKG when non-European objects and works of art are catalogued and do not fit into Eurocentric chronologies or classifications like *Iconclass*.[48]

Openly available digital resources allow for multiple reuse options but they do not necessarily include multiple perspectives.[49] The challenge is how to use collection information management systems to support interpretations that may change over time and are able to allow for multiple perspectives and (scholarly) interpretations[50] and to translate this into digital cultural heritage interfaces that will not perpetuate historically inherited institutional structures and allow for »new« narratives in the museum collections.[51]

Furthermore the selection available for the digital visitor is determined by the institution's decision to publish an object online, as most of the collections online only represent a part of the digitized material due to several reasons, for example structural issues such as conflicting rights or ongoing digitization processes.[52] Finally moral considerations concerning heritage of

45 *Tanya Szraiber:* The Collection Catalogue as the Core of a Modern Museum's Purpose and Activities. Keynote at the CIDOC Conference Access and Understanding. Networking in the Digital Era, 6.–11.9.2014 in Dresden. URL: http://www.cidoc2014.de/images/sample data/cidoc/papers/Tanya-Szrajber_Keynote.pdf.

46 According to the Open Definition »*Knowledge is open if anyone is free to access, use, modify, and share it – subject, at most, to measures that preserve provenance and openness.*« URL: http://opendefinition.org/od/2.1/en/.

47 *Trilce Navarrete, John Mackenzie Owen:* The Museum as Information Space: Metadata and Documentation. In: Karol Jan Borowiecki, Neil Forbes, Antonella Fresa (eds.): Cultural Heritage in a Changing World, Springer International Publishing 2016, p. 111–123, here p. 116 http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-29544-2_7.

48 *Iconclass* is a classification system designed for art and iconography. It is the most widely accepted scientific tool for the description and retrieval of subjects represented in images. The *Victoria and Albert Museum* is currently developing a Chinese Iconography Thesaurus.

49 See *Gertraud Koch* in this issue of HJK, p. 113.

50 *Koch*, see note 44.

51 *Katrin Glinka, Sebastian Meier, Marian Dörk:* Visualising the »Un-seen«: Towards Critical Approaches and Strategies of Inclusion in Digital Cultural Heritage Interfaces. In: Kultur und Informatik 2015 (Culture and Computer Science). p. 105–117, May 2015. URL: http://mariandoerk.de/papers/kui2015.pdf.

52 The Linked Data of the *Rijksmuseum* provided via the API only contains the metadata of the public domain artworks, even if only the image of object might be copyrighted, not the metadata of the object. *Chris Dijkshoorn*, (and others): The Rijksmuseum Collection as Linked Data. URL: http://www.semantic-web-journal.net/system/files/swj1353.pdf.

diverse communities could be integrated into policies and lead to the decision not to make public domain material available like the example of the *Auckland War Memorial Museum* in New Zealand shows. The museum established an open policy but it also developed an indigenous rights statement for images of Māori and Pacific taonga. In these cases they assign a special licence where they know that it is appropriate. These statements known as cultural permissions statements help people understand that the museum is letting them view such objects but they cannot reuse the images, even if they are out of copyright.[53]

Like the example of the mobile app *Zeitblick* has shown, making the collection freely available (in machine-readable form) and reusable can open up a completely new way of accessing the collection and creates a connection between the users and the past at a very basic level, through their own image (selfie). This is a first step to connect the work in the museums with memory practices of ordinary people.[54] By creatively reusing collections they can be accessed and also seen differently.[55] Analyzing open metadata critically and in different ways can point to blind spots in documentation or collections, reveal inconsistences or create the opportunity to develop interfaces that allow for storytelling and alternative narratives.[56] Hence, the next step for the MKG will be to partner with specialists from inside the museum and in the field and non-specialist communities in form of a Wikipedia ›Edit-a-thon‹ that focusses on musical instruments.[57]

Open collections provide opportunities to create an open and participatory digital heritage. As outlined this does not happen simply by putting content online. The potential lies not only in the increased visibility, extra traffic and usage or a strengthened brand, but also in new and unexpected forms that create new value for existing users or will even attract new audiences. If the concept of openGLAM is taken seriously, not only legal, technological and

53 *Sarah Powell:* Enriching our Online Collections – Managing image rights for digital surrogates, 22.10.2016. URL: http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/about-us/blog/2016/enriching-our-online-collections-rights-management; See also: Workshop held during the conference »Sharing is Caring – Building Connectivity through Cultural Heritage« on Reuse of Cultural Heritage: A Challenging Topic. URL: http://sharecare.nu/reuse-of-cultural-heritage-a-challenging-topic.

54 As Gertraud Koch argues memory institutions have not managed very well to establish this connection so far. See her abstract New Memory Modalities – Exploring the Internet for Participatory Memory Work. URL: http://lfk.lv/conference/abstracts.html#abstracts.

55 A powerful example to make the unseen visible like it is addressed by *Glinka/Meyer/Dörk* has been realized by Tim Sheratt with the »Invisible Australians« project. URL: http://invisibleaustralians.org/faces/.

56 *Stephen Boyd Davis, Olivia Vane, Florian Kräutli:* Using Data Visualisation to Tell Stories about Collections. In: J. P. Bowen, G. Diprose, N. Lambert (eds.): Proceedings of EVA London. London 2016, p. 221–228. URL: http://ewic.bcs.org/content/ConWebDoc/56286.

57 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Wiki_Loves_Music/Hamburg_2017.

economic, but also social and ethical issues must be considered.[58] Besides the need to provide content tailored to different expectations, there is the potential to transform collection information into sustainable knowledge environments and evaluate the needs and practices of users and other communities to generate participatory knowledge as an integral part of information collected and presented by cultural institutions.

Dr Antje Schmidt
Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg
Steintorplatz
20099 Hamburg, Germany
antje.schmidt@mkg-hamburg.de
http://sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/en/
@_AntjeSchmidt

58 *Gertraud Koch, Samantha Lutz, Antje Schmidt:* Closing Statement: Sharing is Caring – Hamburg Extension. Opening Up! Building Connectivity through Cultural Heritage, April 2017. URL: https://www.slideshare.net/Digilab/sharing-is-caring-hamburg-extension-closing-statement.